

Genesis, Part 10

With the judgment of the Flood, we ended the second dispensation, the Age of Conscience. The learning there was that the human conscience alone is not sufficient to produce righteousness in mankind. Only eight people remained at the end of the age who had adjusted to the righteousness of God.

We now begin the third dispensation in human history which we will call the “Age of Human Government” in which God will establish the divine institution of human government as a means to produce righteousness in mankind. Of course, it will fail to do so, and we are about to see how that plays out. But before we do, we should develop an understanding of the “divine institutions” of God.

The Divine Institutions

God has designed a marvelous self-policing system under which the whole human race, believer and unbeliever alike, is to function. This system is composed of what we will call “divine institutions,” sometimes referred to as “divine establishment”. These divine institutions were created and designed by God for the use of all mankind. The system’s purpose is to provide an environment of stability and safety under which man can function and live in reasonable security with opportunities for providing the necessities for survival for himself and his progeny, and most of all, provide an environment in which the Gospel of Christ can be preached, and those who wish to do so are free to decide to receive Christ as their savior. When the system works, it works very well. When it fails, it is because of man abusing or distorting it. Though the system is perfect in that when it is practiced as designed it works, it is under the day-to-day control of man, and man is a fallen and depraved, being capable of anything. Looking around the world, we can see the system at work with varying degrees of functionality and success. Where it is failing is a place where Satan is at work.

As you might imagine, Satan will do whatever he can to disrupt this system of divine institutions and create an environment of confusion and danger that is hostile to the goals God has set for His divine institutions. This is the struggle in which man finds himself trapped. Man is being pulled between

two warring factions, good and evil, and the battleground is primarily focused on disrupting this system of divine institutions.

There are four divine institutions comprising God's system. They are volition, marriage, family, and government. These four institutions, when properly used by man as God designed them, provide the essential elements necessary for the survival of mankind and the perpetuation of God's plan for man. Think about that for a moment. What would the world be like if any of these four did not exist or were malfunctioning? We would have anarchy, chaos, famine, constant wars, crime, and very short lives. And yes, we do have these things going on in the world, and they are happening in places where these divine institutions have broken down, are distorted, or in some cases, they are almost non-existent.

With this system, sin is self-condemning under the principle of reaping what you sow. If the system is distorted into something other than its original intent, and sin is the catalyst for that, there will be social, economic, and security ramifications to be dealt with – reaping what you have sown. These ramifications can be so severe as to cause a breakdown of the society that has distorted the divine institutions. Furthermore, a society that reaches this decadent status will either self-destruct or be destroyed by God, using an even more decadent society and/or acts of “nature” as His instruments.

Biblical examples are easily found in the history of the nation Israel. When Israel reached a point of moral and spiritual decline, it was removed as a nation and taken into exile. This occurred with the Assyrian invasion, then the Babylonian invasion, and finally the destruction of the nation by the Romans in AD70. God uses other nations to discipline the wayward nation. Interestingly, in all cases, the instrument of God's justice was always a nation even more decadent than Israel and often more evil. God judged those nations later.

We saw this principle in effect in the time of Noah when the system became so perverted God destroyed the human race except Noah and his family. We will see this principle applied again at the Tower of Babel, only God won't destroy mankind then. Granted, the cited cases are extreme examples and other factors were in play that contributed to God's

administration of divine justice, but the underlying common thread was a breakdown of the social structure that was underpinned by divine establishment.

Satan often successfully attacks divine establishment. This is a common tactic of his. And divine establishment is under severe attack in this nation today. And under the principle of reaping what you sow, America is experiencing the ramifications of the bad decisions we have made concerning God's divine institutions. America today is a product of decisions made by past generations as well as currently living generations. And the trend is not good!

There are four such divine institutions: volition, marriage, family, and government. Let's look at each and try to understand its purpose in society.

Volition

It all revolves around volition. God gave man free will. It is the basic authority for mankind. God could have created man to function totally on instinct like animals. Instead, man was given the power to rationalize and determine right from wrong and act in ways that are contrary to God's desires. God desires for us to respond to His grace and serve Him willingly. God designed mankind and gave him free will to decide for good or for evil. If for good, then man and society would benefit from those decisions, and if for evil, man and society would suffer the consequences. That plays out in the function of the other three divine institutions: marriage, family, and government.

Here is the catch: For free will to be able to choose between good and evil, there must be some codification of what good and evil look like, and that code must be imparted to society's members – and enforced. How can we be expected to decide if something is right and good or wrong and evil unless we have a frame of reference?

We are not born with the full knowledge of what is good and what is evil. That frame of reference comes from what we are taught as children and what we learn through interaction with society. When our parents don't have good values and pass these poor values on to their children, or society has potentially dangerous values in conflict with divine institutions,

then we should expect the product of that family life and/or society to reflect the values the person was instilled with. It should be obvious then that what values the person, as a representative member of society, is taught will indeed make or break a society and bring it to greater moral heights or drag it down into the lowest levels of decadence.

Volition must have a set of correct norms and standards against which to measure behavior that will foster an environment of safety and prosperity in a society. This is why the current trend in society to declare “Whatever is right for you may not be right for me, but as long as it makes you feel good, that is okay” is direct from Satan. In such relativity there are no absolutes, no norms, no standards, and the society is headed for disaster and violence. There **MUST** be a set of norms and standards that are solid and moral, or society will collapse into chaos. A society embracing this relativity is a society headed for disaster.

Marriage

The second divine institution is marriage (Mat 19:4-6). God designed a man and a woman, Adam and Eve. Volition and marriage were created in the Garden (Gen 2:22-24). Man and woman must be free to enter into this mutual relationship, and the decisions they make in marriage determine its success. No, it isn't money or the lack of it that decides a marriage. It is what decisions you make in marriage whether you have money or not. Are they good decisions based on integrity or bad decisions based on your sin nature?

Marriage is designed to form the basis of stability in a society. Would not a society where most adults were married and divorce was extremely low be likely to be most stable? The converse is also true. The stability of a society (or lack of the same) is a reflection of the stability of marriages in that society. Thus, Satan attacks marriage every chance he gets!

The concept of marriage rejects anything that contributes to anarchy, such as promiscuity, homosexuality, communal living, polygamy, or excessive divorce. God designed a “right woman” for every man and a “right man” for every woman. Except in the rare cases where some individual possesses the gift of celibacy, and that is usually associated with some divine mission for the person, man is called to be monogamous as per 1 Timothy 3:2 and

12, and Titus 1:6. Yes, David and his son Solomon both had multiple wives, as did others in Scripture, but this does not condone the practice any more than David's murder of Uriah, also spoken of in Scripture, condones homicide. Scripture records man's failures as well as his successes.

If you believe God is omnipotent and is in control of the universe, and He is a loving God who wants only the best for man, then you must believe God has chosen your right spouse. The problem is we often ignore God's choice for us and pick someone wrong – then we get misery followed by divorce. Or worse, we actually connect to our right spouse and, through sin and arrogance, the marriage is destroyed, and “man has put asunder what God had joined together”. The second most important decision a person can make (the first is a decision for Christ) is the choice of a mate. As the old knight in the Indiana Jones movie said, “Choose wisely.” I would add, “Then commit to making it work.”

Men and women were designed to complement each other. The two sexes were not created alike and, thus, are not equal in the sense each has strengths and weaknesses the other does not possess. Man was designed to have the position of authority in the relationship (Gen 3:16; 1 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:22-24; 1 Pet 3:1, 5). But in a correctly functioning marriage, the woman's contribution to the decision process should carry as much weight as the husband, but the husband was given the responsibility of leadership. The woman is the “weaker vessel” (1 Pet 3:7) but the husband is called to give understanding and honor to the wife. The husband is called to love his wife (Col 3:16; Eph 5:25, 28, 33) but the wife is called to respect her husband (Eph 5:33).

The two see issues from different perspectives because God designed them differently, and good decisions usually result when a problem is viewed from different perspectives. For the unbeliever, these decisions were intended to be made by the couple using sound moral values with the objective being to do what is good and right for the marriage and ultimately the family. By contrast, the believer's decisions should be based on personal integrity and doctrine resident in the soul as led by the Spirit of God, but the result is the same as for the unbeliever – decisions made to do what is right and good for the marriage.

In either case, a healthy set of moral values is an essential element upon which right decisions can be based. One of the responsibilities of a married couple is to be a repository for these good moral values and pass those values on to their children, thus perpetuating the system. Take those good moral values away, and not only does the marriage collapse but so does the society.

Where do these values come from? God. Yes, even the good values of atheists and agnostics are based on God-given values. A nation does not have to be a “Christian nation,” in the sense that most citizens identify as born-again “Christians,” but it does have to have moral values that are compatible with free will and the perpetuation of marriage and the family. Those values, which will include such virtues as fidelity, truthfulness, honesty, mercy, kindness, humility, and proper orientation to authority, are the very bedrock that underpins successful marriages. Take any of those away, and the marriage is in danger.

The two main methods with which Satan attacks the divine institution of marriage are sexual promiscuity and homosexuality. Promiscuity or fornication before marriage threatens traditional marriage because it encourages a lifestyle apart from marriage. Man and woman were not designed to have indiscriminate sexual relations like animals. Sleeping with a potential marriage partner to determine marital compatibility, like test-driving a car, only encourages the common practice of simply walking away from marital problems and not trying to fix them! Marriage is a commitment! Sleeping around is not!

Infidelity by one or both partners is often the death of a marriage. Under the Law of Moses, as given to Israel by God, infidelity was dealt with very harshly. God considers infidelity sufficient grounds to end a marriage (Mat 19:3-12). Moses did allow divorce for other reasons, as the Pharisees charge in the Matthew passage which references Deuteronomy 21:1, but Christ says that was not the way it was designed from the beginning.

God designed a man and a woman – Adam and Eve and not Adam and Steve. Yes, homosexuality is a sin just like fornication is a sin, stealing, murder, or name-your-poison. And just like your sin, in the eyes of God, homosexuality is wrong - PERIOD. What does the Bible say about it? Can't

get much clearer than Leviticus 18:22 “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.” Then verse 24 says it is defiling yourself. Try Leviticus 20:13, 1 Kings 14:24, Romans 1:24-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9, or 1 Timothy 1:10. Sorry, but God does not consider homosexuality an “acceptable alternative lifestyle”.

The purpose of marriage is to perpetuate the human race. God told Adam and Eve to go forth and multiply. Homosexual marriage cannot do that. Nor did God intend for mankind to “perpetuate the human race” indiscriminately by all the males mating with any and all females, leaving a wake of pregnant women to raise fatherless children. And that leads us to a discussion of the third divine institution, the family.

Family

The third divine institution is the family. It was created in the Garden as expressed in Genesis 1:28; 3:16; 4:1; Ps127:3; and Isa 45:18. God’s intention was for man to procreate and “subdue” the earth. The Hebrew word translated as "subdue" means to bring under one’s control. Adam and the woman were given dominion over the earth, but they lost that. Adam and Eve were created perfect. It was expected they would perpetuate that status and pass it on to their children. Implicit in that command is that the earth would remain in the control of righteous mankind, but Adam and Eve sinned and forfeited the right of rulership. As a result, Satan is the current ruler of earth (John 12:31; 14:30; 1 John 5:19).

Children are born vulnerable and require many years and considerable training before they can become productive adults contributing to society in a positive manner. Operative term: “Contributing to society in a positive manner.” To do that requires them to have and exercise a set of norms and standards compatible with that end. That is the primary purpose of the family: To train the child and give them sound moral values, a sense of purpose, and create in them a positive work ethic.

It may take a village to raise a child, but first, it takes parents who themselves have the right values that must be imparted to their children. Unless the parents have the necessary norms and standards, it is highly unlikely the so-called “village” can make up for that deficiency. The village can support what the parents do, but it is a poor substitute for good

parents. Unless the parents have good norms and standards, it is unlikely the child will. Yes, some do rise above the failings of their parents. There will always be exceptions, but they are not the norm.

The ideal family is comprised of a father and a mother. Indeed, there are single-parent families raising children successfully, but I submit there are far more single-parent families whose children are at risk because of it. I said the IDEAL is a two-parent family – husband and wife.

Each parent has a role in the marriage. The male should be the provider and the female the nurturer. Any deviation from these roles runs a risk of reaping what you sow. Are there successful marriages that do not perfectly fit this provider/nurturer role model? Yes, but there are more failures than successes. Are there failures among those marriages that follow the divine perspective? Yes, but more successes than failures, and the failures are more attributed to other causes and human weaknesses rather than any flaw in the basic concept. The high and climbing divorce rate in this country and the high and climbing crime rate have some of their roots in the family where both parents work or one parent is absent forcing the remaining parent to seek employment. Child psychologists will tell you the early developmental period of the child is critical, and the mother's presence is essential during that time, yet many working parents pass the child off to a grandparent or nursery.

The reason we do this often is simply because we want “things” and our culture has convinced many of us we are somehow not whole or “worthy” unless we have a nice home, new furniture, two new cars, and a mountain of debt that requires two (or more) jobs to be able to even come close to managing it. That is called “lust” and is part of Satan's plan. And that is man defining “prosperity” by the number of toys he owns, when in truth, “prosperity” has little to do with possessions.

God's purpose was and still is for the father and the mother to participate in the raising of children. That brings up another objective of marriage: to establish a stable environment for the raising of a family. Children need a stable and, most of all, safe environment to grow up in. The family is the basic unit designed for providing such an environment at the primary level. The family is to provide food, shelter, and clothing. In addition, the parents

must instill that set of norms and standards the child will be called upon to use and, in turn, pass on to their offspring. The family must teach proper orientation to authority and self-discipline. While the parents have many responsibilities to their children, the child has only one and that is expressed in Ephesians 6:1-3 “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” Love will follow, as a natural consequence, after the parents have done their duty. Parents must earn love; they should never attempt to buy it with things.

It is often said the “greatest generation” was the one that won World War II but consider for a moment what that really means. They were called upon to make incredible sacrifices for themselves, their country, and the world. They paid a huge price in money and blood, a price few are willing to pay today. They fought a war upon which the future of the world hung in the balance. Everyone contributed, both overseas and on the home front, but especially those who were in the service. How were they able to do that? What made them so strong?

They were tempered by the depression that preceded the war. Americans learned to do without and be happy with what little they had. We have everything today; they had little in their day. They had values; we have a failing family structure. The irony is they were infinitely more blessed than we are in these prosperous times. America came out of the depression prepared to take on the challenges of a World War and they met that challenge! I firmly believe the depression was the providential work of God preparing His side for what was to come. They were the “greatest generation”.

Then they failed miserably! They came home from the war (and the depression), having had little or nothing by way of any luxury, and into the prosperous post-war economy. Having done without, they spoiled their children rotten! I can still hear some of them saying, “I did without during the depression, my children will never do without anything!” That is fine as long as those solid norms and standards are imparted along with the “things”. I hate to break the news to you, but “things” will eat you alive, if you get your eyes on them and not the source.

The family and how well that family raises their children will determine the course of a society. When the family begins to fail, so will the society. Divorce in America is at record levels and each year the number of unwed mothers climbs a little higher. Over three-fourths of African American children today are born into single-parent families where the father is absent, and the mothers are often really only children themselves ill-prepared to raise a child. That isn't racist. The rate for Caucasians is close behind and closing fast in on African Americans. Do you think that is good for the child? Good for society? Do you think it is merely a coincidence that crime is also way up?

And as for the "village"? We laugh at TV shows and movies from decades ago, but they taught us values. What values do we learn from TV and the movies today? Or from schools? Why do so many of us who can afford it have our kids in private schools? That, my beloved, is the "village" raising your child. So, we have the family in trouble, and the "village" is out of control. God help us!

God designed the family for a purpose. Successful, fully-functioning families are at the very core of society. We cannot afford to let the family fail, because ultimately society will follow suit. This is why Satan is so focused on the destruction of the nuclear family.

But keep in mind that two people can be born into the same family, live in the same house, raised with the same morals, but one can turn out to be a crackhead and the other a preacher of the Word. In the end, it all comes down to what you do with that background and the decisions you make. You may have values, but what you do with them is your responsibility.

Government

The fourth divine institution is government or sometimes called "nationalism". In the devil's world, God must provide safety for mankind. He has done so by dividing the world into national entities. Human government was founded in Genesis 9 and 10, with the geographical boundaries established in Genesis 10, which is the next section of our Genesis study.

There are several forms of government under which the laws of divine establishment can function properly. Actually, the Bible only advocates one

form of government, and that is a monarchy with a righteous king. The highest form of a monarchy will be the millennial reign of Jesus Christ as Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

The New Testament believer is called to submission to civil authority. This is quite clearly stated in Romans 13:1-7. That word translated as “submit” in verse 1 is the Greek *hupotasso*, which is a military term calling for submission to a command authority. Peter uses this same word in 1 Peter 2:13 where he calls for believers to submit to all “authority instituted among men”. Jesus made a brief statement on this very subject found in Matthew 22:21 “...Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.” It should be clear from these verses that Christianity is not a religion of anarchy or revolution. It never was a direct threat to Rome, as some charged in the first century.

It is divine institution number four, human government, that furnishes protection for divine institution number one, volition. Self-determination and the full functioning of volition can only operate in an atmosphere of freedom, whether that nation is a republic, democracy, oligarchy, or monarchy. Civil authorities are to administer justice for the general protection and well-being of society, providing an environment in which society’s members can express their free will as designed by God. Sometimes the standard of justice may be low, or its application might not achieve the desired goals. And, yes, sometimes the righteous do periodically suffer when justice is misapplied due to human failings. But, the believer must “submit” except when a clear violation of the conscious is required by the authority. Just as in the military, where the soldier is required to follow all lawful orders, so is the citizen of a nation. The operative word is “lawful”. Sometimes the threat to volition comes from the government itself, and with that, you have the malfunction of the principle of divine institution number four.

It is also the responsibility of the government to protect divine institutions number 2 and 3, marriage and family. Preservation of the family is essential to the preservation of a society based on law and integrity. Children must learn divine principles that call for the protection of others' rights, privacy, and property. A society that does not instill these values in its children is doomed to become a lawless society where no one is safe. Government,

through the administration of justice, can compensate to some degree for the failure of families to provide this training, but it must do so through ever-higher rates of incarceration of its citizens.

Why does America have such a high rate of incarceration? Some would have you believe it is the failure of the government to provide for those who were forced to turn to crime because they were raised in poverty and could find no lawful means of supporting themselves. I beg your pardon, but there are many thousands of honorable and honest people born into poverty that rose above it and became productive, even wealthy citizens. They accomplished what they did because somewhere along the way they were given a set of high moral values by a parent, teacher, mentor, minister, relative, or the military – someone that enabled them to properly adjust to authority and do what was necessary to rise above their circumstances.

Orientation to authority has generally been non-existent for a large segment of society today. Good values and a solid work ethic have been replaced by the nanny state and the expectation that government somehow owes us something besides protection and freedom. Divorce is soaring and so is the incidence of children born out of a marriage and into single-parent homes or even no-parent homes where a grandparent, also single, is left to raise them. And this is not strictly a racial issue; it cuts across racial boundaries. This is a satanic issue, and America will pay the ultimate price for this failure unless this trend is reversed.

God created the four divine institutions for the perpetuation of the human race. Mankind cannot survive as a society of laws apart from the proper functioning of these laws of divine establishment. They are designed to be self-policing when properly functioning, but the system is in the control of fallen man who is often influenced by Satan. And when the system collapses, God must step in and administer divine justice to get the degenerate society to see its failure and make corrections. This may be painful for the society, and it may be difficult to see it this way, but this chastisement is really a blessing. If the society responds in a positive manner, it can be restored to the blessings of freedom and prosperity it enjoyed before. If it does not respond in a positive manner to the chastisement, the society faces further deterioration and ultimately destruction and possible enslavement.

This principle is illustrated in Dean Clarence Manion's description of the cycle of a civilization here presented as expressed by R. B. Thieme, Jr. of Berachah Church in Houston, Texas in his booklet "In Whom Do You Trust?"

"The ascent from bondage begins with the spiritual faith of a few, their belief and supreme confidence in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. This pivot of believers infuses the nation with courage, and a willingness to pledge their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to gain liberty and freedom. Freedom propels a nation to the summit of prosperity to supreme abundance, the opportunity for evangelism, and the promotion of divine establishment—a client nation to God. But with abundance, a change. God, the source of all blessings, is forgotten. The descending cycle spirals downward through selfishness, complacency, apathy, dependency, and finally in complete degeneracy, back to bondage. The only hope for reaching and maintaining the pinnacle of human existence is to have faith and trust in the living hope, the Lord Jesus Christ"

Summary

Volition, marriage, family, and government. Can society function without them? God gave us these institutions, and they provide the environment that gives us the freedom to exercise our free will within the boundaries of establishment norms and standards. In that environment, we are called to exercise our conscience and make the right choices that are beneficial for us and for society as a whole, and it is through marriage and family those right values are passed down to our children.

A properly functioning system of divine establishment re-enforces those right values. But sometimes the system breaks down. Most of us tried to pass those same standards on to our children. But along the way something happened, a little bit of narcissism crept into the system. Slowly it became more about "me" and less about everyone else. Prosperity has a way of changing values, and the hardest test for us to pass is always the prosperity test. Every society in the history of mankind has collapsed after a period of prosperity when that society became corrupted and degenerate after rejecting the very values that had previously made it great. Very few ever recover from that downward cycle.

The United States is in such a downward turn. Look around you, folks, and tell me we are not when it is not PC (politically correct) or is even illegal to mention the name Jesus Christ in schools or say “Merry Christmas” for fear someone will be offended, or when the school must call and get permission to give your twelve-year-old daughter an aspirin, but she can get an abortion without you being notified or decide she is not really a girl and “transition” to being a boy – and this is kept from you, the parent! Tell me we are not on a downward slide when free needles are passed out to our ever-expanding homeless drug users. Or when condoms are passed out to your kids in school, and you have no say in that? Or your child turns in a paper for a class that in some way defends his faith or mentions God and gets an “F” for it, and not because it was poorly done but because of the subject matter?

The system is a marvelous one, but God, by necessity, has placed it in the hands of mankind and given him free will to exercise in the system. The irony is that free will can be used, and often is used, to reject the system, and there are attendant consequences for doing that. When the system fails mankind pays a heavy price, which is usually a loss of freedom. Can you honestly say you are as free as your parents were? And this freedom from morality we have been given was supposed to produce more liberty, but instead, we are becoming slaves.

The system is amazingly self-policing under the principle of reaping what you sow, but sometimes God must step in and administer a little trip behind the woodshed. Sometimes God has to shake the tree of security and jolt us out of our lethargy. Sometimes pain administered is really a blessing in that it wakens us to the situation and jolts us into action to deal with it.